

STATINTL

*Office Memorandum* • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO

GRA/ORR

DATE: June 19, 1959

FROM : IRC/GE - G. Etzel Percy *HEP*  
1233 SA-20, Department of State

SUBJECT: Boundary Inventory Project

Enclosed you will find a small file on the "Boundary Inventory Project" about which we spoke yesterday. Any material on international boundaries produced and disseminated by this office could be within the scope of Bureau of the Budget Circular No. A-16. In fact, that is a prime objective of our project--to tighten up a service which to date has been more or less carried out on a "hit or miss" basis.

It will be appreciated if you return the first three items in the file, but feel free to retain the Progress Report as we have several copies.

Enclosures:

Circular No. A-16;  
Letter to Robert H. Randall;  
Draft of a Memo;  
Progress Report.

State Dept. declassification instructions on file

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PROGRESS REPORT  
of the  
BOUNDARY INVENTORY

A current project of the Office of the Geographer consists of compiling and maintaining complete files on international boundaries. The objective is a ready reference which should prove authoritative for coping with the innumerable problems which arise on boundary and sovereignty matters. International boundaries must necessarily be shown cartographically in such a way as to reflect the U. S. position, and they must be portrayed consistently from one map to another. Lapses from these two rules are likely without some central source of data and data control. It is thus envisioned that the Office of the Geographer may function in such a way as to clear all boundary information going on maps in which there are policy problems.

The primary organization of the data is by boundary units, each one based on the boundary between two given political entities: France-Germany, Sarawak-Indonesia, Costa Rica-Panama, etc. The total study involves some 250 boundaries, made up of the following categories:

1. Boundaries between independent states
2. Boundaries between independent states and dependent areas
3. Boundaries between dependent areas
4. A special category comprising provisional boundaries, cease-fire lines, armistice lines, neutral zones, etc.

All boundaries above the status of civil administrative divisions are being included with the exception of the U.S.-Mexico and the U.S.-Canada boundaries for which there are special commissions. Water boundaries in the territorial sea and over the continental shelf are also being studied in the Office of the Geographer, but fall into a separate project.

Each boundary unit might be said to comprise an independent study without duplication or overlap from one to another. Therefore, explanation of the techniques essential to the preparation of a single unit is representative of the work necessary to complete the whole. Individual steps in assembling a unit file are as follows, each one of which can conveniently qualify as a minor project in its own right:

STEP ONE:

Preparation of a basic background paper with certain data:

- a. Identification of the boundary unit
- b. Length, as given in official sources or, if necessary, by measurement with a precision instrument
- c. Status (delimited, demarcated, etc.)

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- d. Brief geographical description
- e. Highlights from and reference to the various treaties which originally created the boundary (or segments of it) and which have resulted in any modifications or adjustments. Most emphasis is placed on recording information post-dating 1914.

STEP TWO:

Keying the boundary to the best available large scale map coverage. Assistance in this phase of the work is being given by the Army Map Service. Since so many topographic sheets may be involved in providing coverage of a boundary at a large scale (e.g., 1:25,000 or 1:50,000) it is impractical to acquire and store them in the Office of the Geographer. Accordingly, reference is made to the pertinent sheets, including the call number at the AMS Library. They can thus be requested as necessary, either for retention or on loan.

STEP THREE:

Acquisition of one or more small scale maps to show the boundary in question. At least some cartographic illustration in the file is believed to be desirable, upon which the general alignment can be seen as well as any problem areas pinpointed. In instances where boundaries, or segments or them, are in dispute or otherwise are subject to special circumstances, maps are assembled or prepared to indicate such features.

STEP FOUR:

Preparation and maintenance of a cover sheet on which the current status of the boundary is given in summary form, with reference to more detail if the problems are complex.

Any boundary unit treated in the above way should provide a file capable of yielding sufficient information to determine a cartographic policy with the possible exception of those for large scale maps in disputed or otherwise problematic areas. But even in such instances the file should furnish specific guidance for further investigation. In addition the same file should contain the data for answering a wide range of general questions and many specific ones from throughout the government service and from quasi-government agencies and academic institutions responsible for producing accurate maps and geographical studies.

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To date the Office of the Geographer has completed some parts of some units. However, the project in its entirety is one of considerable magnitude, and still requires many man-hours of effort over a sustained period. The three most serious gaps at present, and in which very little progress has been made, are the boundaries of dependent areas in Africa (especially in the French Overseas Community), of the Middle East, and of the southern and southeastern periphery of Asia.

In Africa there are 106 boundary units, of which 70 are presently being considered as the first phase (excluding those between British dependent areas and those between French dependent areas). Step One has been completed for 54 units and Step Two for two of these units.

Of the 66 units in Asia only one has been undertaken, but it is complete except for the cover sheet.

In Europe all but two of the 53 boundary units have been carried through Step One; 6 have gone through Step Two; and 2 through Step Three.

In North America there are 11 boundary units (excluding U.S.-Mexico and U.S.-Canada) and 10 have progressed through Step Two and the 11th through Step Three.

In South America all 26 of the boundary units have gone through Step One, of which 5 have been continued through Step Two.

In Oceania no work has as yet been started.

Thus, 143 boundary units have been started, but relatively few have progressed much beyond the initial step. It must be said, however, that Step One is probably the most time-consuming on the whole, involving consideration of all treaty documentation associated with each boundary unit in order to assure full legal background.

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